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SUBJECT: Top U.S. and Japanese Education Officials See  
Eye to Eye on Importance of Educational Exchange

11. Summary: In a November 13 meeting, Secretary of  
Education Margaret Spellings, ECA State Assistant  
Secretary Dina Powell, and Japan's new Education

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Minister, Mr. Bunmei Ibuki agreed that educational  
exchange is essential in a globalized economy. The  
Minister also expressed great admiration for the  
Fulbright program, saying that such international  
exchange programs represent a key diplomatic strategy  
for influencing the developing perceptions of nascent  
leaders. He noted that Japan would like to see more  
American students coming to Japan to study in local  
universities. The Minister bemoaned the challenges the  
new Abe administration faces in pushing through much  
needed educational reforms since any changes, including  
allowing for the fostering of patriotism in Japanese  
schools, require amending the Basic Education Law  
passed in the postwar period. End Summary.

22. While in Japan leading a delegation of U.S.  
university presidents, Secretary of Education Margaret  
Spellings and ECA Assistant Secretary Dina Powell paid  
a November 13 courtesy call on Japanese Minister of  
Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology  
(MEXT), Mr. Bunmei Ibuki. Ambassador Schieffer joined  
the meeting, which also included the MEXT Director  
General for International Affairs, Mr. Kenji Seyama,  
and the Director for International Affairs, Mr. Kazuo  
Watanabe. Both sides also agreed on the importance of  
foreign language study and the need for both the public  
and private sectors to support exchange programs.

Importance of Student Exchange  
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33. Minister Ibuki joked that he would like to see more  
Americans studying in Japan since right now the U.S.  
had a trade surplus in this area. Sec. Spellings  
explained that ensuring exchanges are two-way was one  
of the USG's main goals. She went on to explain that  
new economic conditions necessitate the development of  
human capital and the pursuit of lifelong learning,  
which is why the delegation she is leading represents  
the various types of American institutions of higher  
learning, including community colleges. She also  
stated that another goal of her visit was to correct  
the misperception that U.S. student visas are difficult  
to obtain, underscoring that the current issuance rate

is more than 99 percent. In response to Minister Ibuki's question regarding whether she would be meeting with Japanese students, Secretary Spellings explained that she would be giving a speech at Waseda University following this meeting.

#### Exchanges Tool of Diplomatic Strategy but Funding Critical

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¶4. Minister Ibuki pointed to examples of world leaders developing a deep affinity for certain countries as a result of their study abroad experience, going so far as to call educational exchange a type of diplomatic strategy. He expressed great admiration for the Fulbright program and the important role it has played in Japan. Both Sec. Spellings and A/S Powell thanked Japan for its support and the work of the binational commission here. A/S Powell mentioned the new International Fulbright Science and Technology Award involving graduate study and work study opportunities in U.S. institutions in certain key S&T and engineering fields, adding that the U.S. would be extremely pleased if Japanese students applied. Sec. Spellings also emphasized the role of business, pointing to a longstanding partnership between Ohio State University and Honda. She explained that the U.S. delegation would be taking part in a luncheon program at the American Chamber of Commerce Japan to highlight the importance of business involvement in education. Minister Ibuki replied that because of the strengths of the American educational sector, the number of Japanese students in the U.S. is likely to rise, particularly as more Japanese firms chose to send their employees to the U.S.

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#### Overcoming the Language Barrier is Critical

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¶5. Both sides agreed that foreign language study was critical. Sec. Spellings explained she was seeking funding for the National Security Language Initiative she had mentioned earlier. She lauded the work of Japanese firms such as Nintendo, which were using technology in new ways to facilitate language study. The Minister responded that Japan puts great emphasis on the mastery of English speaking among Japanese students.

#### The Challenge of Educational Reform

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¶6. Minister Ibuki ended the meeting by highlighting that the work Prime Minister Abe had asked him to take on presented formidable challenges, particularly since many reforms would require revisions to the Basic Education Law of 1947. One such change sought by the Prime Minister's party would allow the schools to foster patriotism, which has been banned since the law was passed in the postwar period. The Minister elaborated that a decision would soon need to be made regarding whether the proposed revisions should be sent to the House of Councilors before December 15 when the budget process begins.

#### ¶7. Delegation:

##### United States:

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- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings
- Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Dinah Habib Powell
- Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer
- Note taker, Margot Carrington, U.S. Embassy Tokyo

-Interpreter, Yoko Yamamoto, U.S. Embassy Tokyo  
(Although we were asked to supply an interpreter,  
Minister Ibuki conducted the meeting entirely in  
English)

18. This cable has been cleared by Secretary Spellings  
and ECA Assistant Secretary Powell.

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